grant sanctioned by the Central Government for improvement of the infrastructure of the Fora.

(ii) The vacant posts, wherever existing, of Presidents and Members of the State Commissions/District Fora to be filled up expenditiously.

(iii) Ensure constitution/re-constitution of the State Consumer Protection Councils and to hold regular meetings of the same in order to facilitate effective coordination between the State/UT and the Voluntary Consumer Organisation.

(c) No Sir.

(d) and (e) A proposal to set up consumer information centres at Thiruvananthapuram. Kochi and Kozhikkode in Kerala has been received. In this connection, the Standing Committee on Consumer Welfare Fund has taken a decision to provide financial assistance for one such centre in each State/UT, to begin with. Accordingly, the State Government of Kerala has been requested to submit their proposal for one centre in the proforma prescribed under the Consumer Welfare Fund Rules 1992. The district forum at Idukki and Wyand districts in Kerala have already been provided with financial assistance of Rupees ten lakhs each under the Central Sector One-Time-Grant Scheme. Additional financial for these district fora is not covered under the said Scheme.

Representation against stringent provisions of E.C. Act

1131. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any memorandum from the Federation of All India Foodgrains Dealers' Association regarding stringent provisions in Essential Commodities Act;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what action Government have taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The amendments proposed by Association inter-alia include, ignoring of minor and technical offences, giving of opportunity to the offender before initiation of criminal proceedings, non-inclusion of PDS dealers from the purview of the Act, allowances of 10% variation of stock to producers and 7% to dealers, making of all offences bailable, seizure of commodities to be limited only to that commodity in which there has been contravention, power of arrest given to an officer not below the rank of D.S.P. and second and subsequent offences to be considered within the same financial year.

(c) The suggestions of the Association have been considered by the Government. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 1999 is proposed to be introduced in the current Parliament Session.

Diversion of foodgrains from ration shops

1132. SHRI GAYA SINGH:
SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a possibility of increasing leakages and diversion of foodgrains from ration shops, due to wide gap between the price of foodgrains for the below poverty line (BPL) and the above poverty line (APL) sections of population; and

(b) if so, what precautionary steps are proposed to be taken to prevent such diversions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) No, Sir. However, in an operation of the magnitude of PDS leakages here and there for various reasons including the gap between the

prices of foodgrains for below poverty line (BPL) and the above poverty line (APL) sections of the population are not altogether ruled out.

(b) Under the guidelines for implementation of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) the States and the Union Territories have been asked to draw up inspection schedules for District Taluk level officers right from Collector District Magistrate to the Inspector of Supplies, take steps to introduce greater measure of transparency in the functioning of PDS constitute Vigilance Committees at various levels and to hold their regular meetings. A model Citizens Charter for TPDS has been prepared and circulated to the State/UTs for adoption. The State UTs have also been impressed upon to take such measures as may be necessary to curb diversion of PDS commodities including drives to week out bogus ration cards.

Selection of supplier by NCCF

1133. SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA NAHATA: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the National Consumer Cooperative Federation (NCCF) has appointed more than one supplier for supply of the same item;

(b) if so, how far is that practice fair and lawful;

(c) whether there is no transparency in the affairs of NCCF as the same have been denying meaningful information such as details of items procured from local suppliers, their purchase rates, rates of NCCF to Government departments, etc; and

(d) if so, the reaction of the Government and the steps taken to direct NCCF to make public the information without further delay?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) and (b) According to the information furnished by the NCCF, they procure their requirement of supplies from their registered suppliers. They obtain supply of some of the items from more than one supplier depending upon their business requirements. This practice is considered fairly reasonable, and practical.

(c) and (d) The operations of the NCCF are transparent and they furnish information with regard to purchases from local suppliers and others to the extent possible. The NCCF is an autonomous cooperative organisation having its own Board of Directors to decide about their business and administrative matters. Govt. of India do not interfere in such matters.

Amendment of Essential Commodities Act, 1955

1134. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have approved amendment of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955;

(b) if so, what are the proposed amendments;

(c) the reasons and objectives thereof; and

(d) whether due care has been taken in the amendment so that the artificial situation of shortage is not created by traders, businessmen as was created in respect of onions and potatoes in the recent past for taking political advantage and to affect the political process of Assembly Elections?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir. On the basis of the report of the Group of officers under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary constituted as per decision taken in the meeting of the Chief Minister of States/UTs, held on 27.11.98 under the chairmanship of the Prime